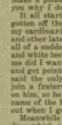

# On Campus with Max Shulman

*(Author of "Barefoot Boy With Cheek," etc.)*

## MY COUSIN HASKELL

I have a cousin named Haskell Kvorney, a sweet, unspoiled country boy, who has just started college. A letter arrived from him this morning which I will reprint here because I know that Haskell's problems are so much like your own. Haskell writes:

Dear Haskell (he thinks my name is Haskell too),

I see that you are writing a column for Philip Morris cigarettes. I think they are keen cigarettes which taste real good and which make a pleasant noise when you open the pack, and I want to tell you why *I* don't smoke them.

It all started the very first day I arrived at college. I had just gotten off the train and was walking across the campus, swinging my cardboard valise whistling snatches of *Valencia*, *Barney Google*, and other latest tunes, admiring statues, petting dogs and girls, when all of a sudden I ran into this fellow with a blue jacket, gray pants, and white teeth. He asked me was I a freshman. I said yes. He asked me did I want to go places on campus, make a big name for myself, and get pointed at in fashionable ballrooms and spas. I said yes. He said the only way to make all these keen things happen was to join a fraternity. Fortunately he happened to have a pledge card on him, so he pricked my thumb and I signed. He didn't tell me the name of the fraternity or where it is located, but I suppose I'll find out when I go active.

Meanwhile this fellow comes around every week and collects his dues which are $100. Lately he has been collecting $10 extra each week. He says this is a fine because I missed the meeting. When I remind him that I can't go to meetings because I don't know where the house is, he twists my arm.

I have never regretted joining the fraternity because it is my dearest wish to be somebody on campus and get pointed at in spas, but you can see that it isn't cheap. It wouldn't be so bad if I slept at the house, but you must agree that I can't very well sleep at the house if I don't know where the house is.

I have had to rent a room. This room is not only hellishly expensive, but it isn't the kind of room I want to live at all. What I was looking for was someplace reasonably priced, clean, comfortable, and within easy walking distance of classes, the downtown shopping district, the movies, and my home town. What I found was a bedroom in the home of a local customwrapper, which is dingy, expensive, uncomfortable, inconvenient, and I don't even get to use the bed till six o'clock in the morning when my landlord goes off to mend his customers.

Well, anyhow, I got settled and started going to classes. But first I had to pay my tuition. This came to a good deal more than the advertised rates. When I asked the bursar what the extra money was for, he told me lab fees. When I said I wasn't taking any labs, he said I was taking psychology which counted as a lab because they used white mice. When I offered to bring my own mice, of which there are plenty in my room, he twisted my arm.

So I paid the man and went to my classes where I found that all my professors had spent busy summers writing brand new textbooks. Over to the bookstore I went, saw the prices on the textbooks, and collapsed in a gibbering heap. At length I recovered and made indignant demands to speak to the proprietor, but they told me the Brinks truck had already taken him home for the day. There was nothing for it but to buy the books.

Next I turned to romance—and found it. Harriet, her name was—a great, strapping girl. I first spied her leaning against the stat ue of the Founder, doting lightly. I talked to her for several hours without effect. Only when I mentioned dinner did she unbend. Her milky blue eyes opened, she raised a heavy arm, seized my nape, and dragged me off to a dimly lit place called The Trap where everything was a la carte. She ordered cracked crab ($1.75), artichoke chateaubriand ($7.00), a scuttle of french fries (15¢ the french fry), an artichoke (30¢ the leaf), and cooped (80¢ the cooped).

After dinner she lapsed into a torpor from which I could not rouse her, no matter how I tried. I banged my glass with my fork, I did bird calls of North and South America. I pinched her huge pendulous jowl. I rubbed the legs of my corduroy pants together . . . But nothing worked, and finally I had to sling her over my shoulder and carry her to the girls dormitory, to the vast amusement of everybody along the route.

But it was not the jeers of bystanders that bothered me. It was the hernia. Fortunately, medical attention is available to students at the college dispensary; all I had to pay for were a few extras, like X-rays, anaesthesia, operating room, forceps, hemostats, scalpels, sponges, catgut, linens, towels, sterilization, and nurses. They would not, however, let me keep the nurses.

So, dear cousin, if you see me these days without a Philip Morris cigarette, it is not because I don't like Philip Morris cigarettes. I do. I flip when I taste their mild rare vintage tobaccos. But I can't afford cigarettes. I can't even afford matches, what with fraternity dues and room rent and lab fees and textbook prices and my girl Harriet and medical care.

Well, I'll write you again soon. Keep 'em flying.

Yr. Cousin,

Haskell

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*This column is brought to you by the makers of PHILIP MORRIS who think you would enjoy their cigarette.*

Source: https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/2061033527